3728.4

First Sunday School Claims.

(Communicated.)

The first Sunday school in Wayne county was organized by Alva Norton in the summer of 1813 at Farno, in Clinton township, then Canaan. It is evident that the school was not kept up during the winter because Deacon Rufus Grenell reorganized the school the next year, 1814. That same year Rev. Elijah Peck, pastor of the Mt. Pleasant Baptist church, established a preaching station at Deacon Grenell's and continued preaching there once a month for eight years. From 1823 to 1827 Rev. John Smitzer, pastor of the Bethany Baptist church, preached there. On November 10, 1831, a church was instituted under the name of the "First Baptist Church of Christ in Canaan." It is presumed that the Sunday school was maintained in the summer months during all of this time, and the school is in existence today. The church is now known as the Clinton Center Baptist church, being the sixth Baptist church in the county, which were as follows: Palmyra church at Purdytown, in 1801; Mt. Pleasant, in 1807; Bethany, in 1817; Damascus, in 1821; Starrucca, in 1823; Clinton, (or Canaan) 1831.

[R. M. Stocker, an authority on local history, says that it is true that the neighbors assembled at Alva Norton's for Bible study during the winter months of 1816 and possibly as early as 1813. But this was not a Sunday school with superintendent, officers and teachers in the modern sense of Sunday schools, which took their impulse from Robert Raikes' movement. If Bible study constitutes a Sunday school, then Robert Raikes did not institute Sunday schools, for there was Bible study in the Jewish synagogues thousands of years ago.]

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